

Wet Meadows: Beaver Habitat

The presence of large numbers of small diameter aspen near flowing water encourage beavers to build dams. If you look closely in this meadow, you can see the remains of two old beaver dams. They may have been built after the last large fire burned in this area more than a hundred years ago. There would have been a large number of young aspen after that fire.

Beaver ponds are valuable to a large number of wildlife species since they provide lush forage around the edges, spots for willow to grow, and maintain an opening in the forest. Forest edge habitat provides diversity from interior forest habitat. Beaver ponds are also valuable in storing water in the drainage and trapping sediment. As the aspen disappears from beaver use or encroaching conifers, the beaver leave and their dams are no longer maintained. The wet meadow that develops on the silt collected in the ponds provides different

but valuable habitat. Over time, without the aspen that result from disturbances such as fire and the help of beavers in creating new habitat, conifers gradually encroach on these meadows and the meadows disappear. Numerous new aspen shoots have appeared near this meadow following the fire of 2002. Maybe beavers will decide this is a good place to build dams again in the next 10 or 20 years.



Beaver and Shorebird with Aspen Cuttings

